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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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SUBJECT Road Information Southeastern Iran (Kazerun-Shiraz-Behbahan area)

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1. In [redacted] I made a trip by jeep over a road which went up north of Kazerun, through Fehlian, Basht, and into the oil producing area around Du Gunbadan through the "back door." I understand that people who travel over this road are often surprised to find that it comes out right in the oil producing area. As my party progressed over the road we were told that we were the first white people who had ever traveled over it.
2. We started on the road a little west of Kazerun and went north through the Shapur canyon. The road was very narrow -- wide enough for one car only -- and it was very difficult, especially in the rain (it had rained once before we started the trip). Coming out on the plain from the canyon the road goes north. Between Shapur and Fehlian it is not too bad. It goes up and down many times, but it is not too steep. It keeps above the valley floor -- going right along the edge of it. North of Noorabad [phonetic] the road crosses the Shaspeh [phonetic] River. As we approached the river we saw a beautiful stone bridge under construction, which crosses the Shaspeh. In [redacted] about four spans of the bridge were completed and there was still one to be built before the bridge could be used. The tribespeople in that area claimed that the bridge was being constructed with their help and money, and if this was actually the case, it will probably be some time before the bridge is completed. This was the only river crossing we had on the road, and the bridge looked as if it would be strong enough to support heavy trucks when it is completed. Since the bridge was not finished it was necessary for us to ford the river. During dry weather it can be forded with little difficulty, but it would be extremely dangerous to attempt it during the rainy season. North of the river the road goes through rice fields, and is extremely poor. During the dry season it is possible to get through it with four-wheel drive, however. It is very difficult to make out the road through the rice fields as there are no wheel marks to follow. Our party got bogged down on the road between Fehlian and Basht in the Boirahamedi [phonetic] tribal area, and had to be pulled out of the mud. Just before Basht the road is extremely poor. It is muddy and vehicles sink in very easily. The mud is thick, gummy, clayey stuff. There is actually little rain

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In this area, but if it rains once a week it is enough to keep the road muddy. Beyond Basht the road improves. It goes through some hills, but the surface, which is made up of gravel with broken stone, is much better. This part of the road may have been a UK developmental road connected with the oil refinery in that area. About 10 miles east of Du Gunbadan the road comes out on the plain and goes on until it hits the highway running from Du Gunbadan down to Ganaweh on the Persian Gulf. The plain through which the road goes is used as a winter area for some of the tribespeople and there are camels and tents all over it.

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3. Du Gunbadan is a town where there are many oil wells. There is a road which runs west and a little north of Du Gunbadan to Behbahan, and although I did not travel the road I was told that it was good. I traveled south of Du Gunbadan to Ganaweh. The stretch of road between Du Gunbadan and Gach Saran, where there is an oil refinery, had a black-top surface. The road was built by the UK, and in [REDACTED] it was in pretty good condition. There were a few holes which had not been touched, but the road, all the way to Ganaweh, is all-weather, and it is solid enough to take heavy trucks at any time of the year. From Du Gunbadan to Gach Saran there are pipelines which parallel the road. The pipelines are on the surface. There are also numerous oil tanks and oil wells along this stretch of road.

4. Between Du Gunbadan and Gach Saran there is a town called Ab Shereen [phonetic] which was built by the UK for employees of the oil company. The town is on the east side of the road and is situated on the side of a hill. It is a good modern town with western (UK) style houses. The houses are very close together and they have running water, which is quite unusual for that country. Recreational facilities are provided for the people who live in the town, and there are gardens, flowers etc, which make the town more pleasant. There are probably 15 hundred to two thousand people living in Ab Shereen, and in [REDACTED] they were still drawing their pay from the Iranian government, and were doing nothing.

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5. In addition to the good roads between Behbahan and Gach Saran there is telephone communication between Gach Saran and Behbahan, as well as between Gach Saran and Du Gunbadan. In Gach Saran there is an Iranian Army post made up of about 50 men with a lieutenant in charge. It is supposedly their job to watch the oil refinery.

6. South of Gach Saran the surface is a fine gravel (which is not loose). The road is wide enough for two-way traffic. As of [REDACTED] there was very little traffic, and what there was was made up of buses and trucks bringing in supplies. The road is well graded. It is not too steep, but it is very winding. When the road comes out of the hills it proceeds along the coastal plain for quite a distance before reaching Ganaweh. This stretch of road on the coastal plain was the only I found in all of Iran where it was possible to go 60 mph.

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7. There are three possible routes that I know of to get from Ganaweh to Borazjan. One of these, which is the farthest inland, is at the foot of the hills and I know little about it. The second, or middle, route is passable for jeeps. The third route goes over the mud flats and can be traveled in the dry season only. It would be risky to go over any of these roads during the rainy season, or for about one month after the rains have stopped, but I believe it would be impossible to get over the mud flats at any time other than the dry season. All three roads are unpleasant at any time of the year because in the dry season, when road conditions are better, the heat is almost unbearable. (The rainy season is roughly from November to 1 April). In [REDACTED] I traveled over the middle route and it took five or six hours to get from Ganaweh to Borazjan. This was during the "cool" season, and the temperature was over 90°F. I understand that it is possible to get from Ganaweh to Borazjan in one hour over the mud flats in dry weather. On the route we took it was necessary to ford the Hilleh River between Kulal and Darudgah, a few miles before reaching Borazjan. There is no bridge and the ford is not marked. The river is about 100 yards wide at the point where it can be forded and the ford is two or three feet deep. The ford is not straight. We saw one car, which started straight across the river at the point where the ford was believed to be, drop off. When we went across one of our jeeps got stuck and had to be pulled out.

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8. I understand that during the dry season it is possible to get from Ganaweh to Bushire along the mud flats in about one hour. Both Bushire and Borazjan are on the main road to Tehran which was originally built by the UK, and which is quite good. There are many chuck holes in the road, and we saw road crews every few miles breaking up stones along the road and shoveling some of them into the holes. The condition of the road varies. In some places it is good and in some it is bad. It is very dusty in dry weather, but it is drained and is high enough to be passable in wet weather. The road is used by heavy trucks all year around. Most of the road is wide enough for two-way traffic, although passing trucks in some of the passes is somewhat hazardous. Some places in the mountains are not wide enough for a car and a truck to pass.
9. Between Shiraz and Persepolis, just north of Zargan, a portion of the road which was formerly a short-cut, motorable only in dry weather, has been raised five or six feet so that it can be traveled in any weather, and it cuts off about five miles. This portion of the road goes across a huge flat plain. The lifting of the road was not entirely finished in [REDACTED] but it was nearing completion. At the north end of this stretch, right at the Kur River, there is a narrow stone bridge -- about as wide as one truck. If this bridge were to be knocked out it would really tie up the road. The stretch of road between Qum and Tehran is surfaced with black-top. The road is used by oil trucks and there is lots of heavy bus travel over it. When I went over this part of the road there were many holes in the road and nothing was being done about them.
10. Between Shiraz and Tehran it is possible to get gasoline in Deh Bid, Abadeh, Shahriza, Isfahan and Qum (and I believe there were two stations between Isfahan and Qum but I cannot recall the names). It would probably be possible to get auto repairs in Isfahan, Qum and possibly in Shahriza. On major roads the government arranges to have gasoline available at specified places, however, on some of the more remote roads it is difficult to get any unless one has contacts along the way who can supply it. Drivers over these roads usually carry extra gasoline with them. Iranian roads would be particularly hard on US cars because even on the main roads sharp stones often fly up and cut holes in the gasoline tanks.
11. Another road I traveled over in Iran went from Shiraz to Sarvistan. This is a poor road, but it is now passable in all weather. It is pretty much level all the way, although it does go over a relatively low pass called "robbers' pass". It is traveled frequently by large, heavy trucks. The road is wide enough for two cars. It is "washboardy" all the way. The construction is dirt shovelled up with broken stone on top. The road skirts Sarvistan to the north, and east of there there is a rather steep pass, but any vehicle could make it. The road goes on to Fasa, a town of about 10 thousand people, which is located in date country. A sugar refinery and cement plant are being built there with US funds. The road from Fasa to Jahrum is not as good as the one from Shiraz to Fasa.
12. South of Shiraz there is a road which goes to Firuzabad, which is now the winter headquarters and tribal center for the whole Qashgai nation. The road from Shiraz gets progressively worse as it goes south, but with care I believe it would be possible to get over it at any time of the year. There are some bad passes and several small stone bridges on this road. The first pass north of Zanjiran is not too bad, but from there it goes into a canyon, and the road is cut right out of the side of the canyon. There is a drop of about 100 feet from the side of the road, and the road slants out. It is dangerous for large trucks, especially in wet weather. This is a one-way road. Anyone who approaches Firuzabad without notifying someone there ahead of time to expect him can expect to be held up and robbed in one of the passes along the road, as this invariably happens. The population of Firuzabad varies at different times of the year. In the summer it is about four thousand and in the winter it gets up to around 15 thousand. The Qashgai tribespeople who inhabit that area would like to build a road on to the Persian Gulf.

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13. The tribespeople in the areas of Iran through which a network of "roads" by which it is possible to get most of the way across to the Gulf. In a hard rain these tribal roads are very difficult to get over, as they are actually no better than tracks, but there is a route which goes by way of Mishan [phonetic] and Bikarz [phonetic], all but about 15 miles of which can be traveled by vehicle. It would be necessary to go about 15 miles on horseback -- from roughly 10 miles east of Bikarz to about eight miles west of the road below Fehlian -- but the rest of the road could be traveled by vehicle. This route would hit a good road [presumably the road between Gach Saran and Ganaweh] which would go on to the Gulf. The tribespeople are eager to have help in improving these roads.

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The map which was used by [redacted] in describing most of the roads in the above report was a mosaic made up of AMS sheets for Iraq and Iran (1:253,440) No. H-39 I, H-39 K, H-39 L, H-39 O & U, H-39 P, H-39 Q, H-39 R, H-39 V & G-39 D, H-39 W, and H-39 X. (Sheet H-39 J, on which the first road described is shown, was not available). Source put the following marks on the map:

- (X) to show the approximate location of Ab Shereen described in paragraph 4.
  - to emphasize location of ford across the Hilleh River described in paragraph 7.
  - to indicate actual location of airport near Shiraz.
  - ⌞ to emphasize location of bridge across the Kur River, described in paragraph 9
- and a line showing a slightly different routing of the road near Persepolis. [redacted] says the road actually goes right beside the 40 foot wall of the city.

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The map marked by [redacted] is available on loan from CIA Library.

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